

# Buccal fat removal may be the latest cosmetic surgery trend on TikTok, but not everyone's on board

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TikTok's latest cosmetic surgery trend is buccal fat removal—a procedure that removes fat padding from a person's face, in turn

removing some of its roundness.

Celebrities like Chrissy Teigen have confirmed having the work done. Others are rumored to have had it done but are staying quiet.

The procedure represents the latest plastic surgery craze on TikTok, with hundreds of millions of views listed under the hashtag #BuccalFatRemoval. Plastic surgeons in favor say it's a quick procedure that targets an area of insecurity for some.

Kirk Lozada, a physician who owns a nasal and facial plastic surgery office in Philadelphia, hosts TikTok and YouTube accounts centering around his office's procedures. He has published several videos showing the procedure.

"The recent trend of buccal fat in [social media](#) and the news has been fun and not that surprising given my experience," Lozada said. "Like most trends, celebrities and influencers sharing their experience drives a lot of attention and boosts interest: Kim Kardashian with vampire facials, Kylie Jenner's lip filler, even Chrissy Teigen with buccal fat not too long ago."

Still, not everyone's on board.

Critics say it's the latest example of an internet trend that pushes impossible beauty standards, particularly on young girls.

Here's what you need to know.

(Pro-tip: if TikTok's algorithm has spared you so far and you're not curious, don't look this one up because it's all you'll see. As a warning, the videos are graphic by nature and not for the squeamish.)

## What is buccal fat?

Buccal (pronounced buckle) fat, is the padding around a face's cheek area, between the cheekbones and jaw bones.

It's a component that determines if a person's face will appear more sculpted or rounder and more cherub-like. It is minimally impacted by [weight gain](#) or loss, a plastic surgeon told *The New York Times*. Rather, you're born with the amount of buccal fat you'll grow up with.

"The ideal candidate for buccal fat removal is someone who has large or full cheeks that don't improve even with [weight loss](#)," Lozada said. The area removed is next to the corners of the mouth.

Lozada said anyone can get a loose example of themselves with and without their buccal fat by pretending to lightly suck in on a straw while looking in the mirror.

How does the removal process work?

The operation is a half-hour-long, outpatient procedure that uses local anesthetic, according to the Cleveland Clinic.

The surgery consists of making a small incision inside the patient's mouth and removing a grape-sized fat pad, the Times said. The incision is closed with dissolvable stitches and patients usually recover within a week. Lozada said the procedure leaves no visible scar.

The removal is considered a permanent procedure (it can be reversed but would be a more complex process).

The cost can range from \$5,000 to \$20,000 depending on the surgeon and would not be covered by insurance, GoodRX says.

What does it look like after someone's gone through with it?

On TikTok, users in favor of the operation or who have had it themselves tout the procedure as a permanent way to "snatch" your jawline.

Teigen said on Instagram that after quitting drinking, getting the procedure helped affirm her self-image.

TikToks about buccal fat removal show photos of celebrities with highly contoured, chiseled, and sometimes sunken jawlines.

Lozada said patients who get the work done are usually asking for a "slimmer face" or "more contour."

## **Why is it so popular right now?**

Buccal fat removal isn't new. The procedure itself has been around for about 50 years.

But, Lozada said, the mystery behind it—be honest, did you know what buccal fat was before this year?—has drawn people in. He called it "the perfect surgery to go viral."

"As opposed to a nose job or lip filler, patients have no idea what buccal fat is and what happens when you remove it," he said. "Therefore you have to do some research and will inevitably come across the addictive videos of its removal through the mouth."

New tweets and TikToks about the procedure have prompted new interest in it.

A New York-based [plastic surgeon](#) told the Times that he is doing three

times the number of buccal fat reductions this year compared to five years ago. Lozada said he has also noticed an uptick.

"I have noticed an increase in patients asking for buccal fat at the outset and coming in with more knowledge about the procedure," he said. "This is very clearly a direct result of it going viral online. I've seen this happen with many procedures including lip filler, fox eye thread lifts, liquid rhinoplasty, and lip lifts."

## **Are there risks involved?**

"The answer is a resounding yes," Lozada said, adding that a trendy procedure isn't always the best long-term approach.

"Producing a result that is trendy but unnatural is risky," he said. "Once the trend passes, the look may not be something the patient wants anymore."

Lozada's advice is not to undergo permanent surgical procedures because of trends.

"There is a high risk of buyer's remorse," he said.

Beyond the cosmetic impact, any surgery comes with risks. According to the Cleveland Clinic, they include infection, facial nerve or salivary duct injury, and numbness.

## **What are the criticisms surrounding buccal fat removal?**

Since the procedure is permanent and the buccal fat pad does not regenerate, a patient's face could look sunken as they grow older.

Plastic surgeons say removing too much of the buccal fat can prematurely age someone or make their face look hollow—especially if there isn't much buccal fat to begin with.

A growing number of TikTok users are pushing back, NBC reported. They say such plastic surgery trends perpetuate unattainable beauty standards. Instead, they want people to embrace their natural features.

"In the era of Instagram face, if you can find a way to love what is different about you from everybody else, I think that's a powerful thing to do," TikToker Sari Oister, who made a video praising her round face, told NBC.

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